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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 002383

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SUBJECT: PORTUGAL: WHA DAS MADISON DISCUSSES CUBA

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Classified By: POL CHIEF TROY FITRELL, REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary: During WHA DAS Madison's visit, Portuguese officials stressed a desire to support deeper coordination between the U.S. and EU on Cuba policy. Portugal's new interest in Cuba is largely due to its upcoming EU Presidency, but also is affected by its desire to broaden the trans-Atlantic dialogue. Portuguese FM Amado is not expected to raise Cuba during his meeting with Secretary Rice October 24 but would be prepared to discuss the issue should the Secretary wish to do so. End summary.

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Coordinating Policies

¶2. (U) WHA DAS Kirsten Madison explored U.S., Portuguese, and European policies on Cuba during meetings with Portuguese officials in Lisbon October 20. Portuguese interlocutors agreed that U.S. and European capitals need to coordinate Cuba policies closely to effect a safer and more efficient transition to democracy in Cuba. Madison made individual calls upon officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Prime Minister's Office, and the Portuguese Institute for Development (IPAD). She discussed specific ways countries could express solidarity with the Cuban people and help to create a context in which democratic change can take place. Madison also highlighted current U.S. planning to respond positively and concretely to the development of a transition government in Cuba. Madison underscored the need for countries to engage on behalf of political prisoners, human rights activists, and labor activists.

¶3. (C) The Foreign Minister's Diplomatic Advisor Paulo Lourenco agreed that, whenever political transition in Cuba occurs, the U.S. and European Union (EU) need to have integrated policy objectives and specific plans in place to assist the process. Lourenco lamented that European capitals and Washington have had little discourse to date on this subject and welcomed Madison's outreach efforts. Lourenco suggested that "trans-Atlantic dialogue" should be interpreted more widely, such that the U.S. and Europeans also engage regional powers in the Americas on the issue. Lourenco opined that, while wider engagement may make the process move more slowly, the end result would be worth the effort.

¶4. (C) Regarding the appropriate regional powers, Lourenco noted that Brazil would be an ideal interlocutor. Lourenco continued that Brazilian President Lula da Silva is a natural leader in the hemisphere, but was "losing traction" to Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. Further engagement with Lula, he suggested, would be in the U.S. interest. Madison noted that the U.S. sees leadership from Latin America on Cuba as essential and views Brazil as key to mobilizing hemispheric

support for a democratic transition.

¶5. (C) Lourenco and one of the Prime Minister's Diplomatic Advisors, Jose Frederico Ludovice, noted that the Ibero-American Summit (IAS) November 5-6 in Uruguay will demonstrate the commitment of various nations to human rights issues in Cuba. The MFA's Director for South and Central American Affairs Helena Coutinho noted that the IAS's Uruguayan hosts were eager to push for more open discussion of Cuba, but may be prevented from doing so by other states. Many nations, Coutinho stated, talk tough behind closed doors but are reluctant to criticize the Cuban regime publicly.

¶6. (C) Ludovice related that much of the EU's policy on Cuba was driven by Spain and that Portugal would coordinate its policies and action closely with its Iberian neighbor. He indicated that Portugal would seek to include Cuba on the list of issues for its upcoming bilateral consultations with Spain. It was important, Ludovice stated, that we not be seen as driving any efforts towards regime change. Lourenco added that Italy may participate in the IAS, giving Portugal and Spain another ally.

Portugal's Optic on Cuba

¶7. (C) Lourenco and Coutinho each noted that they do not expect violence in the near-term in Cuba, but that policies should strive to encourage stability rather than sudden, violent change. Lourenco in particular noted the need to protect the institutions that Cuba has, to avoid creating a vacuum.

¶8. (C) Coutinho explained that Portugal has a two-track approach with Cuba. The Portuguese are committed to widening and deepening contacts with Cuba's civil society, but also engages in a dialogue with Cuban officials. That dialogue, Coutinho was careful to note, always includes the need to free political prisoners and to halt acts of repudiation against human rights activists. Furthermore, Coutinho said

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that Portuguese officials stress that continued dialogue is contingent upon improvement in these areas.

A Euro Response

¶9. (C) Coutinho noted that there is a clear sign of change forthcoming in Cuba and that the EU is preparing to assist the transition. The 25 current members of the EU, she said, are attempting to achieve consensus on concrete measures to respond to various scenarios.

¶10. (C) IPAD's Ines Rosa, however, told us that any EU assistance proposal would be generated by Commission staff resident in Havana and would be distributed to EU capitals for comment. As no such proposal has yet arrived in Lisbon for her agency's approval, Rosa opined that any project discussions must be at a very early stage.

Comment

¶11. (C) The MFA has traditionally stayed away from Cuba issues, deferring instead to a consensus forged with other EU members. In the last several weeks, however, the MFA's leaders have made several overtures to us on the need to plan for a coordinated response to Cuba's future. This change in approach is likely due to Portugal's upcoming EU Presidency, but may also be due in part to Portugal's desire to broaden the trans-Atlantic dialogue to regional Latin American powers such as Brazil. Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado is not expected to raise Cuba during his October 24 call on Secretary Rice, but will be prepared to discuss the subject

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if it is the Secretary's wish.
O'Neal